



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## MAY MEETING.

The Society held its stated monthly meeting this day, May 11, Thursday, at eleven o'clock, A.M.; the President in the chair.

The Librarian announced donations from the State of Ohio; the City of Boston; the Mercantile Library Association of San Francisco; the New-England Loyal Publication Society; the proprietors of the "Heraldic Journal;" the publishers of the "Savannah Republican;" the Trustees of the Massachusetts General Hospital; Mr. George Arnold; Rev. Charles H. Brigham; Dr. Isaac Brinkerhoff, U.S.N.; Rev. John Chester; Count Adolphe de Circourt; Mr. Andrew Cushing; Mr. Samuel T. Cushing; Benjamin P. Johnson, Esq.; Hon. John G. Palfrey; Hon. Alexander H. Rice; Mr. John K. Wiggin; Ashbel Woodward, M.D.; and from Messrs. Holland, Latham, C. Robbins, and Winthrop, of the Society.

A circular letter was received from the Mayor of Boston inviting this Society to take a part in the commemorative service to take place on the first of June; this day being appointed by the President of the United States "to be observed as a day whereon all shall be occupied at the same time in contemplation of the virtues, and sorrow for the sudden and violent end, of Abraham Lincoln, late President of the United States of America."

*Voted*, To accept the invitation of the city authorities.

The Corresponding Secretary announced acknowl-

edgments from a number of persons to whom the last-issued publications of the Society had been sent.

Josiah Phillips Quincy was elected a Resident Member.

The President exhibited a manuscript which he had found among the papers of Governor Bowdoin, and which somewhat resembled his handwriting, — being the inscription prepared for the pedestal of the Beacon-hill Monument.

Dr. SHURTLEFF thought it not improbable that Governor Bowdoin was the author of that inscription, although popular tradition had referred its authorship to Judge Dawes.

An application from George W. Greene, Esq., for leave to copy a manuscript map of the island of Rhode Island, illustrating the expedition of 1778, in the archives of the Society, was granted, and referred to the Standing Committee under the rules.

The President then made the following remarks: —

A little more than a year ago, gentlemen, we thought it not unfit to recognize the commemoration, in Old England, of the three hundredth anniversary of the birthday of Shakspeare, and to enter upon our records a passing expression of our sympathy with all who were engaged in paying homage to the memory of that marvellous man. No other birthday of a kindred character, I am aware, can have equal claims upon our notice with that birthday. The language of Shakspeare is our own language, and his native land is the native land of our fathers. But we may not wholly forget, that, in another and still more distant clime, there is in progress at this very hour a commemoration of the six hundredth anniversary of the birthday of a great poet, who, though far less familiar to most

of us than Shakspeare, cannot fail to be regarded by us all with the warmest admiration; a poet, who — though banished from his own city for the part he had taken in its unhappy civil wars, and though forbidden to return within the boundaries of the republic under penalty of being burnt alive — was yet no sooner in his grave, than all Italy felt that she had lost her foremost man; a great Christian poet, who was not merely the father of modern Italian poetry, but to whom the poets of all countries for so many centuries have been accustomed to turn with an almost filial reverence, and who has been happily and justly styled the morning star of modern literature. Nor can we forget that from his native land came forth the discoverers of our own, and that his language was substantially that of Columbus and Vespuccius. Italy has many titles to the regard and sympathy of lovers of literature and lovers of liberty throughout the world. But Americans may well feel a special interest in all that concerns her welfare and her honor, and particularly at a moment when she is just entering on a new career as a united nation, with the birthplace of Dante as its capital. And no American, I am sure, can have observed without emotion, in the very latest accounts from Europe, that the Chamber of the Italian Deputies was instantly draped in mourning on the announcement of the deplorable event which has deprived our country of an honored and beloved chief magistrate. I will not detain you by any further remarks of my own on this subject, as there are those of our number whose particular province and privilege it is to deal with Dante and his “Divine Comedy,” if any thing is to be said about them here on this occasion. It is enough for me to open the way for them by submitting the following resolution, under the authority of our Standing Committee: —

*Resolved*, By the Massachusetts Historical Society, that we cannot fail to bear in mind with deep interest that a great historical and literary festival is this day in progress in the beautiful city of Flor-

ence, commemorative of the six hundredth anniversary of the birthday of Dante; that we heartily sympathize with all who are uniting to pay homage to the memory and the genius of that illustrious Christian poet; and that we rejoice that the occurrence of so memorable a jubilee finds Italy in the enjoyment of a national union, for which so many of her noblest sons have long and ardently labored, and from which she confidently anticipates a revival of her literary and historic renown.

Dr. HOLMES then spoke as follows:—

It is not my purpose, Mr. President, to speak of the works or the character of the illustrious poet to whom the resolution relates. I had hoped to listen to the voices of some of our members whose studies, whose taste, whose genius, fit them to speak of him with an authority which we should all have recognized. In accordance with a suggestion of the President, I hinted to some of these gentlemen how agreeable their presence, and any words they might feel prompted to utter at this meeting, would be to all the members of our association.

Mr. Longfellow, as is well known to most or all of us, has published two cantos of a translation from the "*Divina Commedia*," a precious instalment of a complete translation which he is understood to have made. Mr. Lowell has given proof of his long and profound study of the great poet in his admirable article, "*Dante*," in the "*New American Cyclopædia*." Mr. Norton, to whose elegant scholarship we have often been indebted, has helped to naturalize Dante among us by introducing a select circle of readers to the "*Vita Nuova*." If we might look beyond our own inclosure, we should see that our townsman, Dr. Parsons, had anticipated all these accomplished scholars by his faithful and poetical rendering of the few first cantos of the "*Inferno*," recently followed by thirteen additional cantos not unworthy of their predecessors.

Some of these gentlemen we might reasonably have hoped to hear from to-day. But Mr. Longfellow, like many of our

sweetest forest birds, is not often to be seen when he is singing; and we must let nature's songsters have their way. Mr. Lowell is, for the moment, suffering from indisposition; and Mr. Norton, who is so competent to say all that we would have said is, to our regret, not with us to-day.

Who is there, then, to speak of Dante? I fear none at least of those whom we see here to-day. Certainly, I shall not be the one to attempt to do justice to such a task. For, to speak rightly, one must have given years of his life to the study of that vast genius, of that eventful life. We talk of Shakspearean critics, men who have studied Shakspeare as astronomers study the stars, as natural philosophers study the tides. To speak adequately even of a dried fossil demands the knowledge of a professed palæontologist. If we must have specialists for the class of creeping things; if we must have ticketed experts for the study of mummy-cases; if none but herpetologists must talk to us of reptiles, and none but Egyptologists of sacred tables,—how shall any but a trained *Dantologist*, one who has not only read and entranced himself in those wondrous visions, but read them with the aid of all that erudition can bring to illuminate their obscurity, and pondered their meaning until he has transported himself utterly into the land and the century of their birth, attempt to add to their glory by his tribute?

Such, Mr. President, is not my intention. Feeling it my duty to account for the absence of those to whom we should have been so happy to listen, I rose to read the roll-call,—which may not have included all whose names it ought to bear,—and to explain why our friends did not answer from their places, while I availed myself of the opportunity to move the adoption of the very appropriate resolution offered by the President of the Society.

Mr. SAVAGE seconded the resolution, and expressed the hope that the remarks to which the Society had just

listened, with the resolution, would be printed in some daily paper.

The resolution was then unanimously adopted.

The President read a letter which he had received from Winthrop Sargent, Esq., of New York, accompanied by a copy of the first portion of a journal, or series of letters, written by Mr. John Andrews, of Boston, during the years 1772-1776, embracing the period of "the siege;" which Mr. Sargent is engaged in preparing for publication in the Proceedings of the Society.

The greater part of the instalment of letters received was read to the meeting by the President, and proved to be of great historical interest.

Dr. SHURTLEFF communicated to the Society a new chart of the harbor of Boston, presented by Samuel Thaxter Cushing. It is called "Eldridge's New Chart of Boston Harbor, compiled from the latest surveys. Boston, 1865."

Dr. ROBBINS offered the following vote, which, he stated, was inadvertently omitted to be offered at the last meeting.

*Voted*, That the thanks of the Society are due to the retiring members of the Standing Committee, Mr. William G. Brooks, chairman, and Mr. Norton, an associate member, for the valuable services they have rendered during the past year.